

What We Believe at Grace Chapel

This document expresses Grace Chapel's "Doctrinal Statement," sometimes also called a "Statement of Belief." Since the church is a collection of individuals, this document expresses a common understanding of critical and relevant biblical truth that the leadership believes best expresses what the church espouses, teaches, defends, and values. While volumes have been written about God's character, attributes and actions, we will purposefully limit this document to express the central and essentials of faith, as understood by Grace Chapel's leadership.

The dictionary definition of "doctrine" is "a set of ideas or beliefs that are taught or believed to be true." While that is likely a good definition of the word, ideas or sentences alone are insufficient to express the fullness and depth of God. Further, far from simply providing a list of God's attributes and activities, a church's "Doctrinal Statement" ought to cause the reader to not only identify facts, but more importantly, experience the personal God, being drawn in devotion and love to the God who is being described. What God does, He does for us!

The central and overarching themes of the Bible are the supremacy of Jesus Christ and God's plan of redemption through him. Every expression of "doctrine" about God demonstrates a part of His character and intentions that relate to us, the people whom He loves, saves, and nourishes. Doctrines are not dry facts about God, but an invitation to know, love, worship, and follow Jesus Christ.

May you be drawn to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord as you read Grace Chapel's Doctrinal Statement!

Who is God?

Any conversation about God starts with the question, "*Who is He? And, how do we know who He is?*" We believe God is eternal. He has always been, and He always will be. The Bible shows us that God exists in three persons: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This three-person understanding of God is referred to as the "Trinity." Each person of the Trinity has the same nature and attributes and are worthy of our worship, trust, and devotion.

God is infinite, but He is also close to us when we need Him. He knows everything, is everywhere, and is sovereign over all. He created the universe and everything it contains. God is patient with us in our imperfect following of His ways. He is gracious and kind in forgiving our rebellion, called sin. He is faithful in the good and bad seasons of life. At the center of God's essence is His holiness. He is perfect, righteous, and above all, He is holy. And it is in His holiness and goodness that He balances His justice and truth with love and grace towards us.

(Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-6; Matthew 3:16-17, 16:16, 28, 18-19; Mark 12:29; Luke 22:70; John 1:1-14, 10:30, 14:10-11, 16-17, 26; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 1 Peter 1:1; Revelation 1:4-6)

The Father

God the Father is loving, generous, gracious, and provides for our every need. Because He is God, He is also to be revered and honored by how we live our lives in worship to Him. God the Father is all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient), all-present (omnipresent), and worthy of all our praise. It is His sovereignty that gives us hope when we pray; that He will answer us through His all-knowing

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and perfect wisdom. God is the Heavenly Father of Jesus, and He sent Jesus as a gift to restore our relationship with Him through grace. It is His forgiveness through Jesus that gives us new life in Him.

(Psalm 68:5; Isaiah 64:8; Malachi 2:10; Matthew 23:9; Luke 10:21-22; John 1:14, 14:9-11; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 1:3; 4:6; James 1:17; 1 Peter 1:3)

The Son – Jesus Christ

Jesus is God's only Son. He wasn't made by God; He has always been God and is one of the three persons of God. Jesus came to earth as a human baby in a supernatural way and in accordance with the will of His Father. This means Jesus is fully God **and** fully man. He lived a perfect life and willingly surrendered His life to die on the cross as part of God's eternal plan for our salvation. God sent Jesus to satisfy His own wrath and pay the penalty of sin for us. Jesus came back to life from the dead to show the world that God accepted His payment for us, and that Jesus has won victory over sin, death, and eternal separation from God. It is because of Jesus that we have any hope of our salvation, which is secure forever through Him.

The Bible also tells us that after Jesus Christ rose from death in a real body, He returned to Heaven. Right now, He is sitting at the right-hand of God, prays for us, and serves as our only Savior and advocate between God and us. He is the leader of the Church, so all we do is for Him and His glory, and not for our own sake. We have great anticipation for the day that He will return to earth with power and glory to rule and reign as the ultimate conclusion of His mission to reconcile us all to God.

(Luke 1:30-35; John 1:1, 14, 18, 29, 14:8-9; Romans 3:25-26; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 Timothy 2:5-6, 3:16; Hebrews 10:5-14; 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18; 1 John 2:1-2)

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the One who brings us alive in our faith and guarantees our eternal future with God, because the Holy Spirit indwells all believers, making them new spiritual creatures. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we use different gifts to serve others through the ministry of the Church. Most importantly, the Holy Spirit convicts us, and the rest of the world, that we need redemption from our sin. He inspires and leads us to live God-glorifying lives as part of transforming us into the likeness of Jesus our Savior. The Holy Spirit also draws near to us in our pain, loneliness, and confusion. It is in those times that He comforts our hearts and reminds us of God's sovereignty and goodness.

(Genesis 1:2; John 3:5-8, 15:26, 16:7-12, 16:13-14; Acts 5:3-4; Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 2:10-12, 6:19-20, 12:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 1:13, 3:14-15, 4:30, 5:18; Titus 3:4-5; 2 Peter 1:21)

How can we know about God?

We believe God shows us who He is in three key ways: through His Creation, through His Son Jesus Christ, and through His message to His Church, the Bible. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God allows us to see what we would otherwise not see in Creation, about Christ, and in the Bible so that we may have a relationship with Him, the living God.

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Creation

God shows His sovereignty and goodness through how He created and sustains the universe. Ultimately, everything in His creation came about because of His spoken command. He continues to hold the entire universe and everything it contains in His perfect control. Although the results of sin include the tarnishing of His perfect creation, He will one day restore creation to a new and glorious condition, which will be better than the original.

(Genesis 1:1–27; Psalms 19:1; Acts 17:24–26; Romans 1:18–23; Colossians 1:15–20; Romans 8:20–22, 2 Peter 3:13)

Jesus Christ

Jesus is the most visible expression of God to humanity. The Holy Spirit conceived Him in a supernatural way through the Virgin Mary. He lived a sin-free, fully-authentic human life on earth. When He was an adult, He performed miracles, fulfilled prophecies, and shared God's plan for redeeming us back to Him. When the time was right, Jesus willingly gave His life on the cross to save mankind as the ultimate expression of God's love for us.

Jesus miraculously came back to life by the power of God. He ascended into Heaven following His resurrection where He is sitting at the right hand of God the Father in full power and glory. Jesus continues to show His power to us today by answering prayer, performing miracles, transforming broken lives, and lovingly intervening in our lives in any way He sovereignly chooses.

(Isaiah 9:6–7; Philippians 2:5–11; Colossians 1:15–20; See "The Son – Jesus Christ" above)

The Bible

The Bible tells God's story of initiating and allowing His people to have a relationship with Him again. Though Jesus is only mentioned by name in the New Testament, it is evident that Jesus is the primary focus throughout the entire Bible. From the first book of Genesis, to the last book of Revelation, the Bible teaches us about God's love, unmistakably found through Christ for anyone who places their faith in Him.

The 66 books of the Bible divinely originated from the mind and heart of God, and are without error as originally recorded. The Holy Spirit inspired His chosen authors to write the very words of God for us to follow. We believe the Scriptures are true, reliable, and ultimately authoritative over every matter to which they speak. As followers of Jesus, we believe we should wholeheartedly obey God's Word. When facing any life situation, we turn to the Bible as the foundation for how God wants to guide our everyday lives.

(John 5:39–40, 10:34–36, 16:13; 2 Timothy 3:14–17; 2 Peter 1:20–21, 3:16)

What does God want us to know?

Mankind was created by God to know, enjoy, and worship Him, but sin separates us from Him.

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We were created in God's image, male and female, for the primary purpose of honoring God. We call this desire and expression of bringing glory to God, "worship." Originally, mankind was innocent when God created Adam and Eve, but sin entered the world through Adam's disobedience, was passed along to each of us, and separated each of us from God because He is holy, and we are not.

(Genesis 1:26–30, 2:15–25, 3:1–19; Isaiah 43:5–7; Jeremiah 17:9–10; Romans 3:21–25, 5:8–19; Ephesians 2:1–7; Colossians 1:16; James 2:10)

God provided a cure for sin.

Every one of us sins, and we cannot fix the consequences of our sin through our own efforts. This is why God sent Jesus to die in our place, both for all of us, and for each of us. Sin infects every aspect of our lives, no matter how good we try to be. It is only through Jesus' sacrifice for us that we can be restored to God forever. His death, burial, and resurrection satisfy God's righteous demands as part of God's plan for our salvation.

God calls us to acknowledge our sin and place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone to restore our relationship with Him. If you put your faith in Jesus, you will be made new ("born again") and become a child of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Our faith calls us to live God-glorifying lives as we anticipate our future in Heaven with God forever.

(John 1:12–13, 3:3–5; Romans 3:22b–25, 6:11–13, 12:1–2; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Ephesians 2:8–9; 1 Peter 1:14–16)

The Church is God's witness to the world around us.

When we put our faith and trust in Jesus, we become part of God's family, the Church, which functions as an earthly, visible expression of Jesus' mission to redeem mankind. We are called the "body of Christ." Grace Chapel is part of the global Church, whose purposes are to share the message of Jesus with those who need to hear about Him, be a living expression of the Kingdom of God on earth, and seek to meet the needs of mankind beyond salvation, as Jesus modeled.

As part of the Church, we gather regularly to worship in community together. We remember Jesus' life, death, and resurrection through Communion as a reminder of His sacrifice and His call for us to follow His example in how we live. As believers, in our obedience to God, we also demonstrate our decision to follow Jesus through the act of water baptism by immersion.

The Church is called to worship God together, to teach His Word to each other, and to encourage one another through every season of life. We are called to show the world what it means to follow Jesus. More importantly, we are convicted to share the message of Jesus – called the Gospel – in every circumstance. In the same way that God the Father sent Jesus, we are also sent by Jesus to show His love and plan of redemption to the world around us.

(Matthew 28:18–20; Luke 22:19–20; John 4:23–24; Acts 1:8, 2:42, 20:32; Romans 6:1–4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:22–23, 2:19–22, 5:25–27; Philippians 2:1–4; Colossians 1:18, 28; Hebrews 10:24–25, 13:15; 2 Timothy 2:2, 3:16; 1 Peter 3:15; 1 John 1:3; Revelation 5:12–13)

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There is spiritual opposition that fights against God and His people.

It is easy to think that what we see is only what exists in our world. The truth is, there is a spiritual world we are all a part of under God's sovereignty. The main enemy of God is Satan, an angel created by God who was cast out of Heaven because of his pride.

Satan desires to be worshipped and honored in place of God. It is through God's sovereignty and Jesus' victory over sin and death that Satan's power and influence are limited. God still allows Satan and his followers – called demons – to spiritually oppose the work of God and His Church in the world today.

We, as individual believers, are called to pray against the work and influence of Satan. It is through the power of Christ and the protection He gives us through the full armor of God that we can stand against Satan's attacks. When we feel spiritually weak and under attack, we can pray, and the Holy Spirit gives us strength to endure to the glory of God.

(Genesis 3:1–7, 14–15; Job 1:12, 2:6; John 8:43–44; 2 Corinthians 4:3–4, 2:10–11, 11:13–15; Ephesians 2:1–7, 6:10–18; 1 Peter 5:8–9; Revelation 12:9–11)

God has planned the ultimate destiny for all people.

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. As He has promised, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge believers for their works. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. Satan himself will be judged and eternally punished. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Everyone will face the final judgment of God. Those who have put their faith in Jesus, having received His righteousness, will enjoy living in the presence of the Father in His heavenly kingdom, but anyone who rejected Jesus will be eternally separated from the Father because of their sin. Jesus will reign forever as King over the heavenly kingdom.

While evangelical Christians differ in their understanding of the nature and chronology of Christ's Second Coming, there is much agreement on the events following his return. Our call as believers is to share the message of Jesus with as many people as we can in anticipation of Jesus' return. We choose to emphasize not our differences, but what we share in common as believers:

- We believe that Jesus Christ's return will be sudden, personal, visible and bodily.
- Believers should anxiously await Christ's return.
- We cannot know the time of his return; however, Jesus encouraged his followers to be vigilant as we await his coming.
- Believers will live eternally with Jesus Christ in a new heaven and a new earth.

(Ezekiel 37:20–28; Daniel 9:20–27; Matthew 24:15–31; Luke 23:42; John 14:1–3; 1 Corinthians 15:51–54; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:21–23, 3:20–21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 2 Thessalonians 1:5–10; Titus 2:11–14; Revelation 20:1–15)